

PRESS RELEASE: HR DAILY 13TH MAY 2013

ENGAGED TALENT SOLUTIONS

WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO WOO BACK STAR PERFORMERS?

The number of employers that support staff in their career development - even at other companies - but have no program in place to try and get them back, is "absolutely gob-smacking", according to Engaged Talent Managing Director Geraldine Ellis-Maguire.

Alumni programs can help employers woo back talented employees, boost engagement

with current employees, share knowledge and secure new clients - but according to recent research, only 16.5 per cent of organisations have a formal program in place.

The Engaged Talent [survey](#), which canvassed the views of more than 200 organisations, found that 86 per cent of employers with alumni programs source at least 10 per cent of their new hires each year through this means,

with some are achieving more than double that.

Other research has shown that, on average, 66 per cent of re-hires made through corporate alumni programs are "star performers", compared with 26 per cent of experienced hires sourced elsewhere, Ellis-Maguire says.



"[Re-hires] come in with their eyes wide open, they already know the pros and cons of working for that organisation; they know what they're

getting into... they just hit the ground running."

Hiring former employees is also a great retention tool for current employees, she says.

It makes them think, "Perhaps the grass isn't greener on the other side", and, "If I do decide to go, I actually know that I will be welcomed back".

One organisation Ellis-Maguire used to work for once headhunted a worker from a

rival company, "investing a lot in that process" and finally managing to secure their services, she says.

"On the first day they turned up in the office, this huge bunch of flowers arrived for them from their former employer."

The card that accompanied the flowers said something like: "We just want to wish you all the best. We know you're going to be a star - you were a star with us, we know you're going to be a star with your new company. We're all thinking of you, wishing you all the best, stay in touch, kind regards...".

"We looked at that and went, 'Wow, the gauntlet's been laid down'," she says.

"Interestingly enough, they returned to that company 18 months later, to a senior management role."

Don't assume they'll come back on their own

Even though most of the respondents in Engaged Talent's recent survey had no

formal alumni program in place, more than 40 per cent placed a medium-to-high value on keeping in touch with former employees.

Employers often assume that if former employees want to return, they'll reach out to the employer on their own, Ellis-Maguire says.

In reality, though, most people don't have that kind of confidence. But a good alumni program will foster a culture that says to staff, past and present, "We value you when you work with us, and we will continue to value you as a person when you leave us, and we will go out of our way to continue that relationship with you", she says.

People often start a new job and find it doesn't meet their expectations, "but rarely do companies follow up on people in that first instance", Ellis-Maguire says.



Geraldine Ellis-Maguire
Managing Director, Engaged

"After a while time ticks by, and if you haven't really heard from the company that you exited on a regular basis post-departure, the relationship starts to be severed and you yourself think, 'If I am going to go elsewhere I'll go to another organisation; I won't go back, because the relationship is over'."

Employers shouldn't rely on leaders informally keeping in touch, either. Some will do so of their own accord, but this is no substitute for a formal program, and could even be dangerous.

"If you've got certain leaders doing this, that's great, but guess what? If they leave you and go to another company, those relationships go with them," Ellis-Maguire warns.

"That's the danger... You've got to be taking this corporate approach."

Another danger of doing nothing formal is that a former employee will set up an informal social networking group for ex-staff.

"If you've got former employees building these pseudo alumni groups, you've got to pray that the person who's putting that together thinks highly of the company," Ellis-Maguire says.

She can think of at least one organisation that ended up with a social network of disgruntled employees.

"Those employees started reaching out to the current employees, and all sorts of mischief was going on."

Read the Engaged Talent research report here: [Where are they now? The benefits of former employees and corporate alumni management](#)